

California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley
Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group
March 2006 Update

Work Group Vision/Mission Statement

The vision of the Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group is developing the “workforce development infrastructure” needed in the San Joaquin Valley to support sustained, long-term economic vitality. The mission of the Work Group is to develop an actionable plan by October 31, 2006 focused on immediate opportunities that can lead to the greatest, long-term benefit for the region.

Summary of Scope of Work

- **Expand Vocational Training** – Work with the community college system, industry leaders, local workforce investment boards, and state agencies to develop a comprehensive plan to expand the region’s vocational training capacity in high-priority programs (i.e. high-demand occupations with living wages and “career ladders” that meet employer needs). Work with Valley legislators to identify and remove legislative barriers to the efficient and effective expansion of vocational training capacity. Develop and implement pilot projects that can be used as demonstrations for the rest of the state to quickly accelerate the availability of vocational training programs.
- **Local Workforce Investment Agencies** – Work with state agencies, the California Workforce Investment Board, the U.S. Department of Labor and the local workforce investment boards in the region to identify system bottlenecks and inefficiencies that are significantly restricting workforce development efforts, including standards for training providers; develop creative strategies to resolve those issues and improve overall effectiveness.
- **College Degree Attainment Rates** – Leverage the work of the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium and participating institutions to develop a college-going culture in the region.
- **Access to Baccalaureate Education** – Identify gaps in access to baccalaureate education in underserved parts of the region. Conduct market assessments to determine the true need for expanded baccalaureate programs. Work with education, industry and state agencies to develop creative plans to fill the gaps, including maximum leverage of distance learning opportunities.
- **Health Services and Medical Education** - Create a consensus with stakeholders and state agencies around a comprehensive, integrated strategy to meet the healthcare worker shortage in the region.

Progress to Date

- **Work Group Meetings and Stakeholder Engagement** – The Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group has met in conjunction with the Economic Development Work Group on four occasions – September 16 at University of the Pacific at the inaugural Partnership board meeting; November 1 in Fresno; December 8 at UC Merced prior to the quarterly Partnership board meeting; and February 1 in Visalia. Each meeting has involved 75 to 100 stakeholders from community colleges, universities, business organizations, and local workforce investment boards.
- **Completion of “Action Plan” Worksheets** – The focus of the initial work group meetings has been on the completion of “action plan” worksheets that will help form the basis for our comprehensive action plan. We are identifying (1) Regional Outcomes – the specific measures of regional progress; (2) Regional Assets – the existing and potential contributors to regional progress; and (3) Regional Changes – the specific actions required for regional progress.
- **WIRED Proposal Process and Recommendations** – In late November, the U.S. Department of Labor released an announcement for the Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) initiative. The purpose of the initiative is to better integrate education, workforce

development and economic development and to “transform” regional workforce and economic development systems. Each state was allowed to submit up to three regional applications.

The Economic Development and Higher Education/Workforce Development work groups prepared a draft application and presented it to the California Partnership at its December 9 board meeting. The Partnership unanimously endorsed the application. The next week, the State selected the Partnership’s application as one of three that would advance to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Ad hoc committees involving the local workforce investment boards, several community colleges, and economic development corporations in the region were quickly formed to shepherd the development of the San Joaquin Valley’s final application to the U.S. Department of Labor. Ultimately, the San Joaquin Valley’s application was not successful. A critique of our application has been received and needs to be reviewed by stakeholders in the region.

Although the application was not selected, the WIRED process provided an excellent opportunity for workforce and economic development stakeholders to develop an early draft of the action plan for the Partnership. The recommendations related to workforce development included:

- Implement a region-wide, industry cluster approach to workforce development focused on Manufacturing (including Food Processing), Health Care, Information Processing and Goods Movement industries;
- Creating a central, region-wide fund for industry training dollars using a “just-in-time” training voucher system;
- Address workforce supply on a regional basis; and
- Link P-16 and workforce support systems to target industries.

- **Progress on Health Services and Medical Education**

Central Valley Nursing Education Center – The California Labor and Workforce Development Agency has asked nursing education leaders in the San Joaquin Valley to develop a proposal for a regional nurse education center that would remove bottlenecks and increase the capacity of nursing education in the San Joaquin Valley so that the region becomes the state’s leading producer of nurses. Tim Curley (Hospital Council of Northern and Central California) is serving as the volunteer-chair of the sub-group developing the proposal. It will be delivered to the state Labor Agency by the end of March.

Health Sciences and Medical Education – UC Merced is leading the effort to bring medical education to the San Joaquin Valley. An internal planning group of medical educators, community leaders and national consultants has just completed a report with recommendations for establishing biomedical and clinical research and medical education programs that leverage existing health care resources and community partnerships. Over the next few months, UC Merced will host a number of community forums throughout the Valley to discuss initial concepts surrounding the proposed medical school and biomedical research facilities, which are anticipated to lead to a school of medicine. In addition, a complete business plan is being developed over the next 8 weeks.

- **Next Steps** – A tremendous amount of work has already been done for the Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group, but there is still much to be accomplished. Specific issues that need to be addressed include (1) identifying the specific vocational training needs in the region so that a proposal can be developed and advanced to the state, (2) convening several special meetings with higher education leaders to address baccalaureate access issues, (3) working with the local workforce investment boards to identify specific recommendations for removing system bottlenecks and improving efficiencies, and (4) working with the California Employment Training Panel and local industry to determine the effectiveness of a region-wide ETP contract to bring additional training resources to the region.